

October 6, 2014

Kia Motors America Consumer Affairs Dept.
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INFORMATION Redacted PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(B)(6)

RE: Kia Optima, VIN 5XXGR4A68CG [REDACTED]

To whom it may concern:

I purchased a new 2012 Kia Optima SX in February of 2012 the car at 52 miles on it and I was very excited about my purchase. I had done plenty of research into what would be the right car for me. Reviews for newer Kia vehicles were very positive, including reported reliability and the design of the car was great. I was very concerned about the warranty due to my commute, so the 60k/100k mile warranty was a huge selling point over other vehicle manufacturers. There was a local dealership within walking distance of my office, and the vehicle had many upgraded features I desired (leather/heated seats).

Unfortunately at 66k miles I believe now that my purchase might have been a mistake. The local dealership Swift Kia, Davis California, has been nothing but frustrating to work with – one of my first oil changes there they put the wrong oil in my vehicle because they did not realize it was the turbo model. Each time I've had a problem with my vehicle and I take it in, they tell me there is nothing wrong with the car. These events have included radio noise, turbo waste gate actuator and improper servicing. Each time I receive the car back, the problems persists. I research online the Optima forum and Kia tech user. In short order, I identify the issue, and bring the bulletin to the dealership for completion. You should be paying me for the warranty diagnosis, Swift certainly didn't earn that.

I now continue all the regular maintenance via a reputable mechanic, and only used the dealership as necessary for warranty repairs. I have had to replace the tires at a time which I felt was premature for a new vehicle, but this now know this to be normal for the OEM tires provided by Kia. I have also had to replace the battery at 60k miles, which I was not expecting – I've never had a vehicle battery last less than five years, let alone only 2.5 years.

On Sept 29, 2014 I drove to my hometown (43 miles) and stopped at the grocery store. When I got back into my car it would not start. The car did go into auxiliary: AC on, radio on, lights on, etc... I shut all that off, and pushed the push start button again - car turned off, out of auxiliary, and I removed my foot from the brake pedal.

- On the 2nd attempt, I realized brake pedal was still engaged, I tried pumping it to get it to release and it would not. I verified that the vehicle shifter was in park. Upon pushing the push start button the car went into auxiliary mode again, I pushed the button again and the auxiliary mode shut off.
- The third attempt was the same as the second attempt.
- On the 4th attempt to start my vehicle I decided to hold the push start button down. My foot was on the brake, the brake was still engaged - it had not released from the prior start attempt. Upon holding the push start button down, the car went into auxiliary mode and about the time my seat was back in position the engine started to turn over and died.
- On the fifth attempt I again held the push start button down, car went into auxiliary, about the time my seat was back into position the engine started to turn over and I immediately released the push start button. The car did not die when I released the push start button when turning over. There was a strong electronic jittering noise coming from the engine compartment while idling in the parking

lot. I could not discern if the noise continued as I drove. I drove it home 2 miles. Battery is brand new, just replaced it 3 weeks ago, all connections were fine.

Once home I sat in my car and turned it on and off several times. When I got out of the vehicle, and stood there staring at it in frustration and I notice my leather seats were cracking! I have babied this car since day one – regularly cleaning it and having it professionally vacuumed out on a monthly basis, then wiping it down with leather cleaner and a leather moisturizer. I also use a sunshade when I park outside in the sun, and I never leave the sunroof open to allow UV rays to deteriorate the interior. One month ago after the last cleaning I can say there was no sign of cracking on the seats.

Upon taking in my car on Sept 30, 2014 the local dealership wanted \$150 to diagnose the problem, because my car is outside the warranty period. I refused service at that time due to my previous experiences - I do not wish to pay a dealership that has not yet been able to diagnose any of the previous issues with my car.

For a vehicle that is 2.5 years old, although driven daily, I am very disappointed in the quality of vehicle I have received. I do not feel that I should be constantly worried about whether or not my vehicle will start, the turbo will perform properly (waste gate actuator issue), the quality of the interior materials lasting for a reasonable period or if I can rely on the local dealership to properly diagnose problems and fix them. My confidence in this car is very low and in your dealership, even lower; what next will decide to stop working or break?

This latest issue has me seriously worried. I have in the last week (10/4/14) had one similar incident where it went into auxiliary mode first, but upon pushing the push start button a second time the engine turned over and started. It is not clear if this is an ignition issue, but the fact that it has involved the brake system I am concerned that this is a serious safety issue. I do not know the source of the problem, starter system, brake system, electrical system, but I certainly don't expect this in a 2 ½ year old car.

I shall have these investigated, but again, I do not feel that a 2 ½ year old car should be having any of these issues. If it is a safety issue, will it fail when I'm driving? Will a failing starter or alternator leave me stranded? I bought a new car to avoid having to deal with these types of issues.

I would like Kia Motors America to respond to the issues I have detailed here, especially as to any safety threats and the deterioration of the leather interior in my car.

With regrets,

[REDACTED]
Auburn, CA [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

cc. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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